
Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces you to the data-gathering process known as “sizeup.” The data gathered through sizeup is used to make decisions to determine if it is safe for CERT members to take action, the actions that they should take, and in what order.

Key Points:

Completing the steps in a sizeup is the way that CERTs gather, assess, and communicate damage information; determine whether it is safe to take action; and determine what actions to take.

A thorough sizeup can make the response safer and more efficient by:

- Identifying potential hazards.
- Identifying needs.
- Prioritizing actions based on safety, capabilities, and resource requirements and doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Sizeup

Sizeup is an ongoing process of gathering facts and analyzing the situation to determine if it is safe to help—and how. The information that CERT members gather will help the Incident Commander and Team Leader establish priorities, make decisions, and take actions to save lives.

Sizeup Process

The nine steps involved in sizeup are:

1. Gather facts.
2. Assess and communicate the damage.
3. Consider probabilities.
4. Assess your own situation.
5. Establish priorities.
6. Make decisions.
7. Develop plans of action.
8. Take action.
9. Evaluate progress.

Step 1: Gather Facts

Facts that CERT members should consider are:

- Time of day and day of the week the damage occurred.
- Type and extent of damage.
- Types of structures damaged.
- Weather conditions.
- Other hazards.

Time of Day and Day of the Week

CERT operations may be influenced by:

- Where populations were when the damage occurred:
 - At home in residential areas.
 - At work in commercial areas.
 - Where people are located in their homes.
 - How much daylight is available.
 - The emergency services that are available, especially in the evenings or on weekends.
-

Type and Extent of Damage

CERTS use general guidelines for assessing damage:

Light damage includes:

- Superficial damage.
- Broken windows.
- Fallen or cracked plaster.
- Minor damage to interior contents.

Moderate damage includes:

- Visible signs of damage.
- Decorative work that is damaged or has fallen.
- Visible cracks in plaster.
- Major damage to interior contents.

Heavy damage includes:

- Partial or total collapse or tilting.
 - Obvious structural instability.
Heavy smoke or fire, known hazardous materials (e.g., gas leaks), or rising or moving water.
-

Types of Structures Damaged

The types of structural hazards and their significance will vary with such factors as age, size, and type of structure.

Weather Conditions

Severe or extreme weather can impact victims and rescuers alike.

Other Hazards

Other hazards that might impact operations include hazardous materials, flooding, and vermin.

Step 2: Assess and Communicate Damage

When in doubt about the level of damage, CERT members should always use the more serious damage assessment.

Light Damage to a structure is indicated by:

- Superficial or cosmetic damage.
- Broken or cracked plaster.
- Minor damage to the interior contents.

CERT Mission: Locate, triage, and treat victims. Prioritize the removal of victims to a medical treatment area.

Moderate Damage to a structure is indicated by:

- Decorative work damaged or fallen.
- Many visible cracks in plaster.
- Major damage to interior contents.

CERT Mission: Locate, triage, and evacuate victims. Minimize the number of rescuers and time inside the structure.

Heavy Damage to a structure is indicated by:

- Partial or total collapse or tilting.
- Obvious structural instability.
- Movement off foundation.

CERT Mission: Warn others of the danger. **Never enter heavily damaged structures.** If possible, shut off utilities from the outside and collect information to give to professional responders.

Step 3: Consider Probabilities

CERTS must identify potentially life-threatening risks with an eye toward:

- How stable the situation really is.
 - What else could go wrong.
 - The implications for CERT activities.
-

Stability of the Situation

Nonstructural damage or instability inside a structure may pose real danger for CERT members. Rescuers need to evaluate their entire surroundings for the presence of such things as:

- Hazardous materials,.
 - Unstable furniture or fixtures inside a structure.
 - Damaged gas or electric lines.
-

What Else Could Go Wrong?

Ask "What if . . .?" questions such as:

- What if there is an aftershock?
 - What if you smell or see smoke?
 - What if a wall that appears stable shifts and collapses?
 - What if the electricity fails while CERT members are in the building?
-

Implications for CERT Activities

The risks associated with the stability of the situation and potential dangers can be reduced using strategies such as spotters to look for potential collapse or remedial stabilizing actions.

Step 4: Assess Your Situation

During step 4 of the sizeup, CERT members will use everything that they've learned to answer the following questions:

- What problems have been identified?
 - What resources are available to apply to these problems while maintaining safe operations?
-

Resources and Planning Questions

- Personnel Resource Planning Questions
 - Who lives and/or works in the area?
 - What skills or hobbies do they have that might be useful for CERT operations?
 - When are they most likely to be available?
 - What is the most effective means of mobilizing their efforts?
 - Equipment Resource Planning Questions
 - What useful equipment is available locally and where is it?
 - Do you need permission to use it?
 - Who can operate it safely?
 - Tools Resource Planning Questions
 - What useful tools or medical supplies are available?
-

Step 5: Establish Priorities

The following principles should govern the establishment of priorities:

- CERT member safety is the number one priority.
- Doing the most good for the greatest number of people.
- Efficient use of the resources available.

Step 6: Make Decisions

Based on the priorities established in Step 5, the CERT Team Leader makes decisions about what the CERTs will do and in what order.

Step 7: Develop Plan of Action

During this step, the Team Leader decides specifically how the team will conduct its operations, considering the highest priority tasks first.

Written Plan of Action

Written plans should be developed for complex situations. Even a simple written plan will:

- Help maintain focus on established priorities.
- Provide accountability for actions taken, resources applied, and expected outcomes.
- Provide post-incident documentation.

Steps 8 & 9: Take Action and Evaluate Progress

- **Step 8 - Take Action.** CERT members implement the plan of action.
- **Step 9 - Evaluate Progress.** Evaluation focuses on both the effectiveness and safety of the operation. This is the most critical step.
- **Ongoing.** Evaluation results are fed back into the decisionmaking process so that priorities and plans can be updated.

Lesson Summary

This lesson presented the nine steps in the sizeup process:

1. Gather facts.
2. Assess and communicate the damage.
3. Consider probabilities.
4. Assess your own situation.
5. Establish priorities.
6. Make decisions.
7. Develop plans of action.
8. Take action.
9. Evaluate progress.